DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 180 555 JC 800 056

AUTHOR Cleek, John E.: And Others
TITLE Directions: Addresses on Education.
INSTITUTION Johnson County Community Coll., Overland Park, Kans.
PUB DATE May 79
NOTE 42p.: Speeches presented in honor of the 10th anniversary of Johnson County Community College (May, 1979)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Arts Centers: *College Role: Community Colleges: Curriculum Development: Educational Needs: Education Work Relationship: *General Education: Humanities: *Junior Colleges: *Liberal Arts: Relevance (Education): School Community Relationship: *Vocational Education

ABSTRACT

These three commemorative speeches deal with the role of liberal education at Johnson County Community College (JCCC) and at community colleges in general. John E. Cleek, JCCC president, outlines the growth in enrollment and facilities that characterized the first decade (1969-1979) of JCCC's development and discusses the possibility that, with the formation of an arts council and the establishment of an artist-in-residence program, JCCC could become a center for the arts in Johnson County during its second decade. Such a program, Cleek maintains, could be integrated into the college without diminishing the importance of career and vocational education. Mark Curtis, president of the Association of American Colleges, discusses the complementary nature of vocational and liberal education: expresses concern over the truncated character of technical education when it lacks a substantial liberal arts component: and cites examples of the successful integration of humanities into the curricula of medical, engineering, and community colleges. Finally, John Schonleber, an educational consultant, discusses the origins of liberal education, the different meanings liberal education has had over time, and the role that the college can play in eliminating the false disjunction between life and work. (JP)

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Addresses on Education

by: Dr. John E. Cleek
Dr. Mark Curtis
Mr. John Schonleber

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Addresses on Education

Presented in Honor of the 10th Anniversary of Johnson County Community College

May, 1979

by: Dr. John E. Cleek, president, Johnson County Community College

Dr. Mark Curtis, president, Association of American Colleges

Mr. John Schonleber, consultant in Curriculum and Institutional Development

Johnson County Community College
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PREFACE

The speeches presented in this book marked the 10th anniversary of the opening of Johnson County Community College. But they do more than note a special occasion—they also focus on the role of liberal education at Johnson County Community College and in community colleges elsewhere.

The addresses made by Dr. Cleek, Dr. Curtis and Mr. Schonleber in May 1979 are presented here in the belief the issues they raise will be of interest and concern to each of you.

A Bold Beginning. . .
. . .A Brighter Future

presented by Dr. John E. Cleek, president, Johnson County Community College, to a Convocation of Faculty and Staff, May 18, 1979

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Some of you, I'm sure, are familiar with the inscription that is engraved over the entry of the National Archives in Washington, D.C., which reads: "What's Past is Prologue." I'm also sure you know the apocryphal tale told by many politicians—all of whom tell it as if it were their own experience—of the tourists who were arriving at the door of the National Archives building, and as they started to leave the cab, noticed the inscription. Turning to the cab driver they asked, "What does that mean?" The driver replied, "It means, you ain't seen nothin' yet!"

That can be a theme for what we are about today. Johnson County Community College had its inception when the Johnson County Commissioners, back in 1963, appointed a Citizens' Committee to study what was described as the need and feasibility for a junior college and vocational school in the county. About a year and a half later, the committee submitted a favorable report, and in the meantime, the Kansas Legislature had enacted legislation, the Community College Act, which permitted for the first time the establishment of a free-standing, public-supported community college. Up until that time, junior colleges were authorized as extensions of the local public school districts, but not as independent institutions in their own right. Six Johnson County high school districts petitioned the State Board of Education to call an election which was held and resulted in a three to one favorable vote establishing the College.

In September 1967, a six-member Board of Trustees was elected. There were 36 or 37 candidates for that six-member Board of Trustees. In June 1968, Dr. Robert Harris was appointed the first president of Johnson County Community College. Under President Harris' enthusiastic and vigorous

leadership, Johnson County Community College opened for classes in September 1969. In the 10 years since, the College has grown

- -from 1300 students in 1969 to over 5000 in 1979;
- -from an upstart college boasting "Yes, we have no traditions" to one of the top two dozen community colleges in America;
- -from a ragtag collection of buildings to a campus valued in excess of $30 million;
- -from an operating budget of 1.3 million to a budget in excess of $13 million;
- -from a staff of approximately 74 to one of well in excess of 300.

Johnson County Community College has made a bold beginning. It is fitting that 1978-79, our tenth year of operation, has in many respects been our finest year. During this year we have been invited and accepted membership in the League for Innovation in the Community College, the most prestigious group of community colleges in America. Our debate team has won a national sweepstakes championship and our women's softball team won a berth in the national tournament to be held next week in St. Louis. Our Jazz Lab Band brought home the only Gold Medal from the Hawaiian Arts Festival recently. The Child Play Center was opened. Project CLEAR has received national attention as an exemplary model program for college learning experiences for adults with retardation. Our Gallaudet Center has continued and expanded operations. The Arts Council of Johnson County, which has been a long time in the dreaming stage, has finally come to a reality. Project QUILL (quality in liberal learning), though modest in terms of dollars, has brought significant national attention to the College, the only community college to receive such a grant in the first round of applications. And a new step toward participative

management has been formed with Shared Governance, and today its first Congress will be installed.

BUT, as the inscription on the National Archives proclaims, "What's Past is Prologue!"

Our first decade has been characterized by growth in terms of numbers, in terms of buildings. Our first decade has certainly seen the College move to a point where we have a strong and enduring foundation in place. Together we confront the future with well-grounded confidence and optimism.

The second decade will not be characterized by the same growth in terms of numbers, in terms of physical facilities. While there will be expansion of facilities, it will certainly not be as significant as the first development of the campus. And while there may be, and likely will be, additional students, the rate of growth will certainly be nothing compared to the first decade. And yet, the second decade can be an even better decade as we move into an even greater emphasis upon quality and diversity of program offerings; as we explore seriously and with a degree of pride in being in the vanguard of community colleges, the integration of liberal learning and career education in new and innovative ways.

I see the second decade of the College as a time of the focusing of attention on the arts. Johnson County Community College can and should become the cultural center of Johnson County, with the formation of the arts council and with the possible establishment of an Artist-in-Residence program in the year ahead with what appears to be the financial support of the Johnson County

Community College Foundation. The role of the arts and humanities in the community college, which has not been the most prominent feature of community colleges nationally, can be a prominent feature of our program without in any way diminishing the importance of career and vocational education.

The possibility of expanded emphasis on international education, an international exchange program, is very real. Serious conversations are continuing with representatives of the Taiwanese educational system, and others are in earlier stages with the prospect of faculty and staff exchange with similar type colleges in other countries, a program which I believe will greatly enrich the educational experience of our students and certainly will enrich and enhance our own experience as educators.

There is a very strong indication of dramatic increase in private support for Johnson County Community College. New vigor and vitality exist with reference to the Foundation. The leadership of the Foundation is committed not only to making the Foundation a group that is supportive in terms of public relations, but also supportive in terms of substantial financial support.

And finally, and certainly not least important, Shared Governance is a reality. Today as we install the Congress, there should be no illusions in our minds that Shared Governance is a panacea. It is a fragile human system and will be only as successful as we make it. The first year will be, without a doubt, the most critical year. The challenge we face, I think, is to avoid the almost instinctive temptation to vacillate between dysfunctional mass participation on the one hand, and its opposite, the inclination to return all decision-making to authoritative hands. I

am optimistic about the future of Shared Governance at Johnson County Community College, not because it will be an easy task, but because of the commitment we share to making the second decade of our College one of which we can all be justifiably proud.

Vachel Lindsay wrote a poignant verse which reads,

"It is the world's one crime.
Its babes grow dull.
Not that they sow, but that they seldom reap;
Not that they serve, but that they have no gods to serve;
Not that they die, but that they die like sheep."

The crime of life is not to die, but to grow dull and die like sheep. The continuous fulfillment of oneself, the avoidance of a living death, still remains a central goal of education. This is a process which for all of us must never end. The future of Johnson County Community College will be limited only by our limitations of vision or dedication. Together we can provide the educational opportunities our citizens want and need.

Commencement Address

presented by Dr. Mark Curtis, president, Association of American Colleges, at Commencement exercises for the 1979 Graduating Class at Johnson County Community College.

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President Cleek, members of the Board, faculty, friends of Johnson County Community College and graduating class of 1979:

Not only is Johnson County Community College a member of the Association of American Colleges, but your very able President serves on my board of directors. Hence, I take orders from him from time to time and I must say that he is a very faithful and important counselor to all of us on that board and all of us on the staff at Washington.

I take special delight in being here with you today. By birth and rearing I am a Midwesterner. In Kansas City I am less than 200 miles away from an old home of mine in the town where I attended and graduated from high school—Council Bluffs, Iowa. I've always been grateful for the sound learning that I received there from a group of able, dedicated teachers.

I mention these personal details because the basic assumption underlying what I have to say to you is rooted in my boyhood and education in Iowa. I grew up with a healthy regard both for the practical knowledge and skills that are required to wrest a living from the soil and for learning that gave such hard-won living meaning and a sense of purpose. I gained an understanding that working with one's hands and working with one's brain were complementary and that each was an appropriate, worthwhile and even praiseworthy endeavor. In other words, my experience and education gave me an existential sense that the practical arts and the liberal arts are compatible. Only much later—and then with some shock—did I become aware that many people consider them antithetical.

I am aware that what I learned as a boy is still an attitude shared by many of you here today. Johnson County Community College, as we have heard in the review of its 10-year history, has been dedicated both to the liberal arts and the practical arts. Very recently the College has received a small grant to enable it to develop courses that relate liberal learning and practical learning. A recent visitor to your campus has reported to me that he found these courses highly effective.

Yet I know in the last generation, developments in both society and higher education have opened a deep chasm between technical education and liberal education. In recent years, in fact, the differences between the two have become so intense that the liberal arts have begun to be derided as the useless arts. Many students responding to the seemingly insatiable demand of society for specialized, technological and professional training have turned their backs on the liberal arts and flocked to programs of vocational and career education excluding them. The response to such a turn of events is to set up a prophetic cry that man does not live by bread alone and that a civilized society is more than a collection of specialists turning out an unending stream of material goods and services. Unfortunately, however, the pursuit of the liberal arts has itself become so fragmented and so much the vocation of specialists that to many that cry seems hollow and meaningless. Before it can again be taken seriously and before practical learning and liberal learning can be once again joined fruitfully together, we must for our generation rediscover the fundamental meaning of liberal education and restore it as a guiding principle for all those who teach and learn.

Perhaps a start toward this goal can be made by asking the question, what is liberal about liberal education? The word liberal, as used in that context, has, according to the dictionary, a meaning that is generally obsolete except as it has been kept alive in the phrases liberal education or liberal arts. The word liberal comes from the classical Latin adjective *liber* which means unfettered or free. Liberal, therefore, when used in this way means "of or befitting to a free man or woman." Is it possible that there is ambiguity in what is to be understood by a free man or a free woman today? I know of at least two ways in which we define free. One way is negative and the other positive and I dare suggest that the negative meaning of free, which is only the beginning point for understanding the connotation of the word, has in these times become dominant and has, for most people, arrested further thought about the matter. The negative way to define free distinguishes it from what it is not and stops there. Thus, to be free is to be *not* under the control of some other person or authority. Or it is to be *not* subject or limited by conventions or traditions. It is to be unfettered and unburdened by obligation and duties. These are probably the most commonly accepted meanings of the word free. Few would quarrel with them, but are they adequate? Do they fully express the meaning of free? *Not* being under the control of other persons or *not* being subject to the dictates of prejudice, traditions or obligations, a free person can do as he pleases when he pleases, and need not worry even about a silly rule of consistency, if he pleases to act in one way at one time and quite the opposite at another. Yet it does not require great experience or depth of understanding to perceive that a person, free merely in the negative sense, may only have the illusion of being free.

Circumstances, whims, the acts of others if not the authority of others, will more often than not determine what he does and when he does it.

To be genuinely free, then, a person requires not only the absence of external controls but the power or ability in oneself to exercise choice or to determine in some measure one's own acts or thoughts. Such power or ability does not come with the water one drinks or the air one breathes. A person may receive, as his or her birthright, the negative conditions of freedom, but he or she must acquire or learn the positive attributes of being free. It is at this point in the argument that the application of the word liberal to the concept of education may begin to convey something significant. Liberal education is the education that makes it possible for men and women to attain understanding, as well as knowledge, and to develop command over their intellectual powers so that they can think to some effect, make significant judgments and give direction and purpose to their actions.

Experience since the time of Socrates seems to have shown that certain studies are particularly conducive to liberal education. Some, like the study of language and mathematics, enhance our abilities to think clearly, express ourselves effectively and understand one another at least part of the time. Some, like the study of literature, deepens our insights into human emotions, attitudes and even the comedy, tragedy and irony of existence. Some, like comparative government, anthropology and sociology, break through the limits and biases of our parochialism. Some, like history, show us that we stand on the shoulders of past generations and teach us about the origins and development of ideas, institutions and cultural

forms, the products of the human spirit and human enterprise. The study of science helps us to make sense of the physical universe and learn about our place in it. The study of religion and philosophy gives us knowledge of man's ultimate aspirations and enables us to weigh critically and reflectively all we do and say and think.

But having made these points we should note at least two others: first, if any of these studies become over-specialized disciplines, pursued exclusively for their own ends, they cease to be liberal and take on the characteristics and limitations of professional training; second, such a list of studies does not exhaust the possibilities of liberal learning. I do not want to belabor the first point. We are all now beginning to appreciate that history, literature and science, for example, have been for a generation taught exclusively to produce historians, literary scholars and scientists rather than to fit persons to deal with the ambiguities and perplexities of life. As a consequence, such teaching of them has helped them fall into disrepute and unpopularity. Please don't misunderstand me, I am myself an historian and have contributed, as John Cleek noted, to the sum total of scholarly publications. I still feel that some of what I did was significant and I continue to appreciate the need for research and scholarship. But I have come to understand that there is more to education than research and there are more ends to teaching and learning than reproducing replicas of oneself.

The second point that I mentioned deserves a little more attention. The ends of liberal education are not attained only by studying those branches of learning commonly considered to make up the canon of the liberal arts. Liberal education also

means developing an approach to knowledge and experience that engenders a curiosity about the meaning of experience and a reflective attitude toward the interrelatedness of what is known. This approach has something of wonder about it—a bit of that sense of awe which Tennyson expressed when he wrote:

> Flower in a crannied wall,
> I pluck you out of the crannies,
> I hold you here, root and all, in my hand
> Little flower—but if I could understand
> What you are, root and all, and all in all,
> I should know what God and man is.

The approach to knowledge, which this poem exemplifies, is never satisfied with mastery of specialized knowledge, whether academic or technical. It reaches beyond technique and specialization to seek the relation of specialized knowledge to other parts of learning and experience, in hope of attaining, as far as is humanly possible, an understanding of the whole of reality—of all in all. Obviously, liberal education in this sense is not something that a person completes in two or even four years of a college course. Rather it is a process that is begun in college and, if successfully begun, becomes a lifetime habit. In the words of Emerson, "The things taught in college, in schools are not an education but a means to an education." To be genuinely liberal then, an education instills a long-lasting reflective and critical attitude, assists individuals in developing and refining their own standards and values, to give them authentic autonomy and freedom and encourages them to use their technical skills and their intellectual capacities to enhance life, to make sound judgments and to achieve a degree of wisdom.

In a country such as ours where each citizen enjoys the opportunity to be free in a wider sense than most people in history have ever known, liberal education must not be considered a frill or an extra. Quite to the contrary, it needs to be considered an absolute requisite of any course of instruction or program of education if men and women are to use their inheritance of freedom responsibly and effectively. In the ultimate sense because it gives people the capacity for positive freedom it is the most practical of all kinds of learning. It makes it possible for persons who are competent mechanics, technicians, salesmen or professionals of any kind to be both leaders in their vocations and effective participants in the life of their communities.

I am pleased to say that I discern a new awareness of this point abroad in our land. Last year I visited nearly 30 campuses to evaluate the impact of institutional grants made by the National Endowment for the Humanities. I met faculty and administrators who were committed both to improving curricula in the liberal arts and enhancing technical and professional education by introducing solid components of liberal learning into them. I saw these people in community colleges, state comprehensive colleges and large land grant universities. I encountered them in traditional liberal arts colleges and pretigious research institutions. My experience since coming to the Association of American Colleges in November has confirmed these impressions of a year ago. My experiences, particularly at the Association, have been confirmed by noticing the nature of the projects which institutions have proposed in applying for AAC QUILL grants—these are grants for Quality in Liberal Learning that the AAC has been supporting by

means of funds received from the Ford Foundation. (One of the QUILL grants, granted by the AAC, has been held by Johnson County Community College.) These grants have, almost without exception, developed highly promising efforts to restore meaning to the liberal arts and many of them have demonstrated the compatibility of the liberal arts and vocational education.

Among the projects which I visited a year ago, I found of particular importance the attitude of faculty and administrators responsible for professional and technical education at many institutions. They showed a growing concern for the truncated character of technical or professional education without a substantial component from the liberal arts. In their projects they had developed an appreciation for the value of liberal learning because it helps students understand how the parts of specialized knowledge fit together and make a whole and how expertise can be used responsibly, purposefully and sensitively, not just to make a living but for the benefit of mankind.

I can illustrate my points by referring to some of the visits that I made in evaluating the grants of the National Endowment for the Humanities. Among the best conceived and most successful projects funded by such grants were ones that introduced substantial programs in the humanities in medical, engineering and community colleges. In those institutions these humanities programs were not add-ons or supplements but became an integral part of the schools' educational programs. At a medical school I visited I was surprised to find that a humanities course was required in each of the first three years of a medical student's training. These courses were not regarded by the scientific and

medical faculties as soft subjects, demanding less of the students than courses in the basic clinical sciences. They were and were known to be serious studies requiring rigorous intellectual effort different than but equal to that expended in the student's other work. Or to take another illustration, the humanities of an engineering school were not merely English composition for engineers and history to give them a cultural patina. They were solid courses in the humanities that added a real dimension to the practicing engineer's capacity to be an imaginative, sensitive and responsible designer of systems and structures for human use and benefit. Finally at a community college in a Southern state, I found that a special humanities course for technical students had been developed with full consultation between the technical faculties and the liberal arts faculty. The students whom I interviewed reported that it was valuable to them because it helped them sharpen their sense of purpose. The technical faculty, while regretting that it took a little more time than the former humanities requirements, still believed that it made an important contribution to their training programs. It had its greatest effect on the liberal arts faculty. Challenged to rethink the substance of their courses, to reconsider the purposes which their courses served and to find new ways to bring out the significance of liberal learning for a doubting clientele, they were stimulated by the effort and surprised by acquiring new perspectives on old material. The results were gratifying. Technical students, after taking the course, were passing a state examination in English composition in higher proportions than the academic students who still followed the traditional program. Furthermore, the technical students were also getting an orientation to their vocations and their roles in society that

contributed significantly to their sense of self worth and their own self confidence.

Graduates of Johnson County Community College, tonight you have every right to feel a sense of accomplishment. The degrees you are about to receive give proof that you have successfully completed a systematic course of study. You have attained a goal that you had set for yourselves. In that sense, tonight marks an end. But if your course of study has included, as I know it must have done, elements of liberal learning, you have not completed your education. In this sense, tonight is not an end. When I make that assertion I am not thinking just of those among you who may proceed from here to a senior college or university, but I am thinking of all of you. Indeed I am thinking especially of those who will enter the world of work and return to their vocations with new ambitions and a heightened sense of purpose. You have received, in Emerson's words, a means of education. You may augment it by formal programs of continuing education, but more important than that you can bring curiosity, reflection and a sense of your own intellectual powers to all that you experience in the future. You can use the beginnings that you have received here as the means to live thoughtfully and creatively in whatever you do and thus fulfill what you have begun. As you leave here, I trust that you will also remember that your degree is not something gained only for you privately and personally, but it is something that should bear fruit for the community in which you work and live. With your degree, in other words, you also receive a public trust to be used for the benefit of your neighbors and fellow citizens. The free person, liberally educated, lives not only for him- or herself but for others.

In closing, I wish, therefore, to repeat that i count it a privilege and a pleasure to be here with you this evening and I wish you Godspeed in the future that lies ahead of each of you.

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This College as Prophet

presented by Mr. John Schonleber, consultant, to a Convocation of Faculty and Staff at Johnson County Community College, May 18, 1979.

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Mr. Chairman, Trustee Hunter, President Cleek, staff and members of the College family—especially those honor students who are with us today.

Directly or indirectly, the way in which education takes place is determined by the needs and the expectations of the society which is served. The institutions of learning in any society reflect and respond to the aspirations and requirements of its community. When an institution of higher learning becomes self-serving and disregards the society of which it is a part, it atrophies and may very well cease to exist. Conversely, when an institution of higher education not only allows itself to be formed and to be informed by the society which it serves, but beyond that responds actively and creatively to the purposes and objectives of the society which it serves, such an institution flourishes and moreover enjoys the privilege of centrality in the life of the society.

The community college is a bold and remarkable recent demonstration of this claim. Within recent (and, indeed, painful) memory, institutions of higher learning in this country were perceived by our society as selfish, remote, narrowly focused, indifferent and isolated from the current of events, the course of our lives and the singularly pressing needs of our society. Indeed, so intensely did Americans resent the failings of their institutions of higher learning, that a crisis of enormous proportions occurred within higher education. We tend to remember the disorders of the late 1960s and the early 70s, but we tend to forget just how fundamentally critical the situation had become.

There can be no question, therefore, that the hour in which this College was conceived, founded and opened to its community, our society was deeply troubled, deeply confused, in genuine disorder. It is not therefore surprising that the essential characteristics of this College have been wisely described as accessibility, comprehensiveness, quality and flexibility.

My purpose, however, is not to write the history of that period (for I could not), nor to dwell on its implications, which are so many. I speak of that period, however, for two reasons: to remind ourselves of those crises through which we seem now to have passed and to recall that the institution of higher learning whose foundation we celebrate today came to be in such a climate of social distress and confusion. It is telling, I think, that the College first spoke of itself in the terms with which we are all so familiar, "Yes, we have no traditions!" That apparently was an important and bold statement to make at the time, and if the times have changed, as I believe they have, it is no accident that a member of the staff of the College who shared in its creation, one of the charter members, told me only a week ago, "The spirit of 1969 can never be recaptured."

Allow me to interject parenthetically an observation or two which bear directly on what I have chosen to say to you today. First, I must acknowledge happily that every sentence I speak deserves a footnote identifying its origin as an observation made by a member of this College in the course of my scores of conversations with you. Second, you may find that my remarks tend to suggest that I am speaking only of the instructional staff of the

College. Such is absolutely not the case. Indeed I found it increasingly impossible in the past several weeks to distinguish among full-time and part-time instructional staff, administrators and support staff. It gradually became clear to me that there is no one on the staff of Johnson County Community College who does not merit—who has not earned—the title of teacher, of educator. Finally, in my remarks, I find that I use interchangeably "you" and "we," "your" and "our." To me it is significant that I am unable to distinguish easily between myself and the College. I came to you as a total stranger and I must believe that I leave you as a member of the College and as a friend.

The fact of the matter is that the times have changed; the conditions which prevailed at the birth of this college no longer obtain. Our society, in a way not readily intelligible (at least to me), has survived and changed substantially. The expectations of society to which this College sought to respond a decade ago—respond thoughtfully and in a leaderly way—those expectations are no longer the expectations of our own society. The vitality of this College can be insured no longer by the response to needs which guided its foundation; in a word, its capacity for creative leadership, for thoughtful and formative response to its community, must be redirected—or taking into account the likelihood that it has already taken place, yet informally, that it has already begun to redirect itself, that redirection must become institutionalized and it must become explicit.

A few moments ago, I alluded to some of the tragic events and attitudes which characterized our society a decade ago. But if I seemed a bit

unsure of myself then, and I am, I am even more so now as I recognize the need to suggest at least some indices of the altered expectations and requirements of the society in which we find ourselves today. We do know that our concern for civil rights during the 1960s has evolved and broadened to become concern for *human* rights—for women, for single parents, for children, for the handicapped, for homosexuals, for the aged, for the dying—and we know that our concern to make the world safe for democracy as it existed in the 1960s has altered, is beginning, I suspect, to be altered in a fundamental way with a view to ensuring a world in which human rights and public order prevail everywhere. We wish to make possible, even to provide, opportunities for life-long learning, orderly change in our lives and our work, the capacity to deal with diminishing resources while preserving and enhancing the environment which we have inherited. We wish to master the information explosion while combatting functional illiteracy everywhere. We want values adequate to the rapidly altering situations which characterize our daily lives. We aspire to life and work without disjunction, life and work suffused with a common meaning. We wish to understand better the complexities and frustrations of human desires, motivations and conduct. We speak, therefore, and finally, of our need for a more humane world. Well might we ask ourselves how this is to be done, however. Well might we pall before the challenge to our institutions of higher learning. Yet because of our demand for a more humane world, there is now and will presumably continue to be—something that initially was to be surprising but is no longer so—a call for the restoration of liberal learning, for education in the humanities,

a return, if you will, to the tradition of liberal education which our culture has historically celebrated and cherished.

Educational leaders and journals of our trade call for a return to "liberal learning" as a response necessary and appropriate to the needs of our society. Whatever this means, it is at least a hint, something of a suggestion, both as to what we suppose ails our society and as to what we believe might suffice for an orderly address of our problems.

To understand what liberal learning and the humanities are, it is essential to recognize both that they have meant different things at different times and also that they are too often misunderstood or misconstrued in our own times.

Very briefly, the liberal arts were first understood by the ancient Greeks to be those activities befitting or suited to free (as opposed to servile) men. "Free men," as Clavin Linton has observed, "were to be prepared for one kind of life, slaves for another, and the study of liberal arts was for the former, for the free. For the latter, the servile, education was at most...training in a vocation, a skill, so that free men might have the leisure to pursue their own creative activities." I think that is a reasonably accurate, however brief, statement by Linton of what was characteristic of high Greek culture.

Over time, of course, as social needs and expectations changed, the liberal arts were redefined and reclassified, principally in response to two movements: the secularization of Western culture and the excruciatingly slow

democratization of society.

Today, perhaps, liberal learning can best be described as a group of intellectual disciplines (habits of thought, if you will) and the bodies of knowledge which those disciplines disclose: **history,** which lends perspective to us and reveals relationships in time to us; **philosophy and ethics,** which afford us the capacity to form sound judgments; finally, **language and literature,** which enable us to discern meaning and to communicate in whatever medium.

It is necessary to insist, therefore, that the humanities, the liberal arts, are habits of the mind and bodies of acquired knowledge. Despite the confusions of the past, they must never be confused with two other, unfortunately similar terms: humanism, which is secular religion; and humanitarianism, which is the lived virtue of benevolence.

But again, why should we be told today that we should be turning to the humanities and liberal learning and why should they be restored in our society? I think because, in the first place, we are only just emerging from a period in which education has been understood to mean primarily (and, indeed, for some, exclusively) *preparation for work.* As recently as 1972, a leading educator wrote that education constituted the total effort aimed at helping all individuals become familiar with the values of a work-oriented society, to integrate these values into their personal values systems and to implement these work-oriented values into their lives in such a way that work becomes possible, meaningful and satisfying to each individual. Bear in mind, that was presented forcefully as a

definition of education.

In the very brief period since the founding of this college, persons no less eminent than Sidney Marland, who was then U.S. Commissioner of Education—and the whole educational establishment with him—called for replacing traditional liberal arts education (which had contributed in their judgment to the disorders and upheaval of the 1960s), with meaningful, satisfying and work-oriented career education.

Sid Marland was explicit: if education were to be true to itself and to the demands of society, it would be *throughout,* in his words, "education for work." Liberal learning, if it were to sustain its claim to "relevance" (which we all recall was the catch word in those days), in such a context, it could do so only insofar as it demonstrated its relevancy to education-for-work and its practical function in a work-oriented society.

Alas, however, humane learning has never had an easy time of it, but what Marland and his cohorts were saying to liberal educators was essentially a fresh challenge.

Historically, liberal learning and the humanities have been too often perceived as antagonistic to the larger purposes of society. But this has been the case, I would argue, because they have been imperfectly, even erroneously understood or simply misconceived.

Let us take a moment to reflect on that antagonism upon those errors and misunderstandings, because it does bear on our lives here and now. For unless our present

understanding has been freed of these confusions, no possible defense, much less an advocacy of liberal learning is possible.

The humanities and liberal learning have been identified as antagonistic to science, technology and vocational education. This is not new to us. The antagonism itself is not new. Indeed, it is as old as Western civilization. Let us not forget that liberal education was for free men, the elite; training and occupations were for slaves, the servile—"servile" being taken to mean work which you must do, but which you do not choose to do. Even after 2500 years of experience this antagonism persists. The advocates of liberal learning today are perceived to be those identified with "selective admissions" as opposed to "open admissions," "education of the advantaged" not for the less advantaged. Liberal educators are themselves perceived as elitists and condescending in their relationships with other areas of education and learning. The world of science, technology and career education continue to be thought of as "practical," even inferior in their ordination to practice and to work, rather than to leisure. Within this antagonism, work itself is seen as a regrettable necessity to be avoided and reduced in duration as much as that may be possible, by whatever device.

Liberal learning is the object of yet another antagonism, and one perhaps as old as the one I have been describing, and nonetheless powerful. It is the antagonism with religion and religious belief, especially those which we have come to be described as "fundamentalist" beliefs. The roots of this antagonism lie very deep in Judaeo-Christian tradition, but they became eminent

when the study of the humanities and liberal learning, in the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance, were identified with a set of beliefs or code of ethics which became known as humanism—a set of beliefs and a code of ethics which were understood, correctly I think, to be fundamentally secular and profane—in a word, human, not godly or sacred.

But the woes of liberal learning do not end there, and here is the irony: for the strongest advocates of the humanities and liberal learning are too often its own worst enemies. Why is that? Because, when you press advocates of the humanities to defend their values or to defend the value of liberal learning, too often they will answer by explaining that liberal education is *good for* something; it may be *good for* getting a job, it may be *good for* one's leisure hours, it may be *good for* your retirement, it may be *good for* a fuller and happier life. Alas, we are told, and this to me is the worst of all, a liberal education is *good for* appreciating the "important and the finer things in life."

Of course, the humanities and liberal learning are simply none of these things. The humanities, if we would listen carefully to history, are not in and of themselves antagonistic to science, technology or career education. They are not (and never were) a set of beliefs or secular code of ethics, a secular religion and, above all else, if we would listen not only to history but to one man in particular, to the Aristotle of classic Greece, we would know at once that, in a word, the humanities in and of themselves are, absolutely speaking, *good for* nothing. It's a crucial point with Aristotle: they have no practical end; yet they may have practical uses;

but their purpose is not practical. They serve no purpose beyond themselves—they are good in themselves, worth pursuing for their own sake (which is not to say that good cannot derive from them). Unlike so much of our knowledge and beliefs, the humanities and liberal learning are their own justification, whatever application may be derived from them.

At this, our College, these misunderstandings, these errors and the antagonisms may be detected; but they do not prevail. Here liberal learning has its place; but perhaps it is a place rather too well defined, too sharply circumscribed. The call for a return to liberal learning, the call for the integration of the humanities and career programs suggest, to me at least, that our perceptions and our understanding are not as free from traditional misconceptions as they might be. Surely, to some degree, we are heirs of our tradition, we are of the two cultures. For us, to some degree, alas, "to educate is to educate for work," to some degree, "to train is for the servile, to learn is for the free."

But now I must share something of a secret with you, and I am being totally honest when I say that. Five weeks ago, I came among you bearing what was to me an alarming designation, "humanist in residence." For the life of me, I did not know what that was nor what it was meant to be, and I'm still not certain that I do. In my ignorance, I developed a "hidden agenda" and that hidden agenda is the secret I should like to share with you now, to lay bare: I made a decision to become your student. I believed that if nothing else, at least I could learn from you who you are, what you believe, what

concerns you most, what you profess. If I were successful, I thought, if I learn well what matters most to those entrusted with the overwhelmingly perplex responsibility of educating, then conceivably I might be of some help to you; indeed, I might even earn my hire.

I was aided, of course, not only by your exceptional hospitality and readiness to share your concerns with me, but I was aided by the fact that this College was about to mark formally its tenth anniversary as an institution of higher learning. That meant many things: as an institution you were young, but you were not callow; you were mature, but the institutional arteries had not yet begun to harden. It was clearly a time for retrospective analysis of what had been achieved, and prospective development of what the future might hold: "a bold beginning, a better future." As an institution of higher learning you were already known to be a leader, you were known for the quality of your staff and your were known for the achievements of those whom you had taught. The times, it seems to me, for an itinerant humanist were ripe in Johnson County, Kansas.

Let me now share with you what my hidden agenda has yielded.

I learned in my conversations that, without exception, two qualities pervaded, in an exceptional way, the thinking and the lives of every member of this institution: *concern with one's profession* and *concern for one's students.* That is not a gratuitous remark. I tell you with absolute sincerity that I have never before seen its equal, concern with one's profession and concern for one's students.

I learned more. I learned very quickly that liberal learning not only had its place within the life of the College, but that liberal learning was a matter of special interest, a matter of immediate and special concern to all of you (and I must stress *all*). I learned that a series of careful and thoughtful, yet exploratory steps had been taken prior to my coming to the College—steps taken to discover how better liberal learning and the humanities might serve the College and its community. The consultancy, which to my mind was to prove crucial, of "Buz" Alexander, the QUILL Grant, the release time arrangements which made possible close yet always exploratory relationships between faculty in both the humanities and career programs (and the decision to provide the College with a humanist in residence for an extended period), all of these quite obviously expressed this concern and measured the progres of that concern within the College. I learned that all of this was born of the belief that in some way liberal learning and career education could be integrated to their mutual benefit and not simply because it appeared modish on the scene of higher education. In fact, although throughout higher education there continues to be a great deal of talk about the integration of the humanities and career education, very little has been done about it; to some degree this College already is an exception to that generalization.

In speaking with you, I learned yet more. I learned that those who had most actively engaged in attempting the integration of the humanities and career education—both the teaching staff in the humanities and the teaching staff in career education—testified uniformly that unexpected results had occurred.

The teaching staff from the humanities who were so engaged discovered, in their own words, how very much they as individuals had learned from the experience, how very much it had affected and would continue to affect their professional lives and development, and how very readily it would influence their teaching of their courses in the future.

But I learned still more, and this is perhaps simply critical to the future: I learned in dozens of conversations with teaching and administrative staff in career programs that not only were they favorably disposed to the integration of liberal learning in career education, but that that integration is already and has long been an essential feature of their educational offerings—not principally through electives or distribution requirements, but through offerings in career programs themselves.

No one with whom I spoke in career education suggested in any way to me that it is possible to educate well and properly without providing students with the perspective which history affords, the values and the critical mind which philosophy imparts and the literacy which the study of letters and communications provides. Indeed, *it would be impossible not to conclude that liberal learning has much to gain from integration with career education.* As a matter of fact, this has been the consistent testimony of teaching staff from both cultures. The principal function of history, philosophy, literature and communication in career programs is acknowledged, obviously to be primarily practical, that is to say, they are undertaken in the service of one's profession, but it is never

limited simply to that. It is the formation of both the mind and the will which impels the career educator, if my experience is valid. It is that, as well as the heightened concern for the integrity of life and work, as well as the keen sense of professional integrity, which may most substantially affect for the better educational offerings of the College in the humanities.

It is now therefore necessary for the College itself to ask not only how career education can benefit from integration with the humanities, but also, and perhaps with even greater urgency and emphasis, how liberal learning can benefit from integration with career education.

You have been told in your programs for this special convocation that I was to have spoken to you about "this College as prophet." Let me, now, in concluding, do so.

From all that I have learned as your student, from all that you have so generously shared with me, I have come to be certain of one thing: Johnson County Community College has at this moment the capacity for an exceptional prophecy—a prophecy of immense importance to your own lives, and not improbably to the life of the nation itself.

And what is that prophecy?

Characteristically, we think of a prophet as one who foresees and indeed foretells the future. While I do not intend to ignore that sense of the word, let me turn for just a moment to what I believe is its deeper, more suggestive meaning.

To my mind, a prophet is one who interrupts

the times in which he or she lives, who interjects and intervenes, one who anticipates, if you will, the predictable course of events, but in light of that predictability or seeming inevitability, the prophet is one who chastens and reforms, one who insists, one who commands (whether she or he is heard or not), one, finally, who forms and reforms the times and thereby the future—and only in this sense does the prophet foretell. The future is known to the prophet only because the prophet *creates* the future by his or her intervention, by the exclamation mark, as Kierkegaard liked to say, which he or she thrusts into the course of history.

We cannot *know* what the future holds, for the future is obscured from us and it eludes any light we seek to bring to bear upon it, despite the best efforts of the futurologist. We cannot *know what the future holds but we can fashion* the future. We can, in the words of that wonderful Scot, David Hume, bring light not *to* darkness, but "bring light out of darkness" by our own prophetic agency.

What is required of this College as it enters its second decade, I suspect, is for the College to acknowledge and affirm its collective wisdom, to learn from it, to make it, for each and all, one's own. In that wisdom and shared understanding, to divine the times, to discern the time in which we live, to discern the course of events in education and in society itself—and to do so in the first instance very selfishly, for your own purposes. But with that wisdom to go forward, and go forward *together* with *mutual objectives, mutually arrived at,* drawing always upon your own experience, your own judgment, your capacities, your commitments to your

profession and to your students, and thereby drawing upon those of the society in which you find yourselves.

Your concerns, I believe, are great; sharpen them. Your commitments to your profession and to your students are singular; intensify them. You are more than a community, more than an accidental gathering of people; you are a college, a *collegium*, a gathering or a body of people come together with a common purpose. Your purpose is clear: to educate and to educate well and truly.

Perhaps to educate, so far as one is able, for life—eliminating once and for all the false disjunction between life and work, and in so doing, advance toward that society in which none is servile and all are free. As a college you are a body with a life of its own. Emerson, who understood well the nature of education, would urge you to grow not through accretion or accident, but borrowing a metaphor from the botanist, he would urge you, as he said so often, to grow endogenously, to grow from within; to realize the now unknown possibilities before you through your own vitality and your own creativity—a growth, of course, well-suited to the second decade of your life.

In this may the College be prophetic. In this may it not respond simply in a passive and desultory or even reluctant way to the needs and expectations of society. You can be, rather, creative, anticipatory, formative of your own future and that of the community you serve.

And finally, I owe something of a minor apology or at least I should make a minor

adjustment. Earlier I cited the remark of one of your colleagues, one of the charter members of the staff, to the effect that the spirit of 1969 could never be recaptured, and I think I implied that I endorsed that observation as plain good sense. But I failed to tell you the rest of his remark, which many of you may already know. He said, "The spirit of 1969 can never be recaptured, but we must try to come closer to it."

Let this College now, therefore, set forth on a new mission—a mission as bold and improbable as that which inspired its founders. Let it in an orderly, thoughtful, informed and critical way make its assertion, let it intervene in the course and tide of events, let it shape rather than be shaped by its times, let it, therefore, form and foretell its future and that of its community. Above all, let is be your own, let it be native. Just as the architecture of this College (so clearly an expression of the mission of its founders) interrupts the rolling hills around it, let your communal enterprise interrupt with assertion the surrounding landscape and form the land from which you rise.

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FEB 22 1980